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Back to Moses, spies have been a secret weapon

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WASHINGTON—In the Bible, God told Moses, "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan." Joshua is described as sending two spies to measure the strength of Jericho. Gideon was sent on an eavesdropping mission to the Midianites' camp.

Centuries later, espionage was refined to become a vital part of diplomacy by the kingdoms of Europe. In 1812, it sparked a war for the U.S.

Today, the Navy spy ring allegedly masterminded by John Walker Jr., the exchange of prisoners last week in Berlin and the case of a former FBI agent facing charges in Los Angeles are drawing increased attention to the business of espionage and concern about whether the spy business is on an upswing.

Federal authorities at various levels are saying the Walker case may be the most serious security breach in decades. Whatever its outcome, however, a look at the record indicates the recent espionage cases are modern variations in a very old game.

Large-scale, organized espionage first developed in the 17th Century under British Prime Minister Oliver Cromwell and the politician-cardinal Richelieu in France.

The War of 1812 over British interference in American trade was fueled, in part, by the revelations of a British agent, John Henry, who had spied on the politicians of New England for old England.

Henry's papers, obtained by then-Secretary of State James Monroe, showed that while England was publicly talking of peace, many of its leaders were privately itching for a fight with its offspring across the Atlantic. Three months after the Henry disclosures, the British got their wish.

During the Civil War, a Washington, D.C., widow, Rose O'Neal Greenhow, was able to advise her native South of future Union troop movement by using "every capacity which God has endowed me," according to accounts of her spying.

In the last 40 years, 78 people have been prosecuted for violating U.S. espionage statutes, according to FBI records. They have included CIA employees, engineers at defense-contracting firms, enlisted men and military officers and Soviet agents working at the United Nations.

The most publicized and controversial espionage case in U.S. history involved Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the couple executed in 1953 for passing atomic secrets to the Soviets.

The highly charged trial, legal appeals that reached the Supreme Court and the couple's execution on June 19 sparked protests around the world, a request for mercy from the Pope and countless pleas to President Dwight Eisenhower for executive clemency, which he denied.

The Rosenbergs were executed at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, N.Y., the day after their 14th wedding anniversary. They were the first spies ever executed on orders from a civil court and the only American couple ever executed together. More than three decades after their deaths, the debate about whether they actually were guilty continues.

But there was no debate over what Francis Gary Powers, a civilian CIA employee, was doing when his U-2 was shot down over Sverdlovsk in the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960.

Nor was there much doubt about the activities of Col. Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, the director of a Soviet

spy network in the United States. Abel was convicted of espionage in New York and sentenced on Nov. 15, 1957, to 30 years in prison.

In a manner befitting the occasion, U.S. and Soviet officials secretly arranged to trade Powers and Abel at the border between East and West Germany. On Feb. 10, 1962, Powers and Abel were swapped on the Glienicke Bridge, which links West Berlin with the East German city of Potsdam.

On that same bridge last Tuesday, the U.S. exchanged four accused or convicted East European spies for 23 East European prisoners in East Germany and Poland, with two others to leave East Berlin shortly.

For sheer flair, it is hard to match the nicknames of "The Falcon and the Snowman." A book by that title was written by Robert Lindsey and published five years ago. Christopher Boyce ["the Falcon," for his love of birds] was sentenced to 40 years in 1977 and his partner, Andrew Daulton Lee ["the Snowman," for his cocaine dealings], received a life sentence.

A copy of the book was discovered among the possessions found in the Norfolk, Va., home of John Walker Jr., who was indicted earlier this month in Baltimore for allegedly masterminding an espionage ring.

According to evidence presented at their trial, Boyce photographed classified documents at his job at TRW Corp., a defense contractor in Redondo Beach, Calif., and gave them to Lee, who then sold them to the Soviets, usually in Cuba or Mexico.

The only FBI agent ever indicted for espionage, Richard W. Miller, 47, is scheduled to go on trial soon in Los Angeles for allegedly passing classified documents to a female KGB agent with whom he was having a personal relationship.

In FBI affidavits, the 20-year veteran was said to have acknowledged demanding \$50,000 in gold and \$15,000 in cash in return for providing secret documents to the Soviet KGB agent, Svetlana Ogorodnikova, that would provide "a detailed picture of FBI and U.S. intelligence activities, techniques and requirements."

Authorities have identified Ogorodnikova, 34, and her husband, Nikolay, 51, as KGB agents. The Russian emigres are standing trial in Los Angeles.